

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2073

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to juvenile sentencing alternatives.

Brief Description: Revising juvenile sentencing alternatives.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Law (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Moeller and Chase).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Juvenile Justice & Family Law: 2/28/05, 3/2/05 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/9/05, 96-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/13/05, 47-0.

House Concurred.

Passed House: 4/19/05, 98-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Changes eligibility for the Mental Health Disposition Alternative.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE & FAMILY LAW

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Dickerson, Chair; Moeller, Vice Chair; McDonald, Ranking Minority Member; McCune, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse, Lovick and Roberts.

Staff: Sonja Hallum (786-7092).

Background:

A juvenile offender who is adjudicated of an offense may be given a sentence by the court based on the statutorily available sentencing options. The majority of the sentences imposed by the juvenile court are standard range sentences. Standard range sentences are calculated based on a grid system using the offender's prior criminal history and the seriousness of the current offense.

If the court finds that a standard range sentence is not appropriate in a specific case the court may impose a statutorily available alternative sentence. In 2003, ESSB 5903 was enacted and created several new sentencing options, including the Mental Health Disposition Alternative (MHDA).

The MHDA permits a court to impose a suspended sentence based upon the offender's compliance with mental health treatment. The eligibility requirements for the sentencing alternative are as follows:

- the juvenile must be subject to a standard range sentence of 15 to 65 weeks;
- the offender has a current diagnosis of an axis I psychiatric disorder (excluding a diagnosis solely of a conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, substance abuse disorder, paraphilia, or pedophilia);
- there is an appropriate treatment option available in the community;
- the plan for the offender identifies and addresses requirements for successful participation and completion of the treatment intervention program; and
- the offender, the offender's family, and the community will benefit from the use of the disposition alternative based upon assessments and evaluations conducted for the use of the court. The court should also consider the opinion of the victim.

A juvenile offender is ineligible for the MHDA if he or she is convicted of a sex or violent offense.

If the court imposes the MHDA, the court will impose a sentence including confinement up to 65 weeks. The court will suspend the sentence, place the juvenile on community supervision for up to one year, require participation in treatment interventions, and impose one or more local sanctions. Local sanctions may include requirements such as up to 30 days of confinement in the detention facility, community service, payment of fines, or probation requirements such as attending school and curfew.

If the juvenile fails to comply with the terms of the MHDA the court may impose sanctions, or may revoke the MHDA and impose the original sentence.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The eligibility requirements for the Mental Health Disposition Alternative (MHDA) are changed. The requirement that the juvenile offender be subject to a standard range sentence between 15 and 65 weeks is eliminated. A juvenile may now be eligible for the disposition alternative if he or she receives a Department of Social and Health Services Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) commitment sentence of any length.

The offenses which are ineligible for the sentencing alternative are changed. An offender who is adjudicated of any of the following offenses is ineligible for the disposition alternative:

- a firearm offense;

- an offense category A+, A, or A- offense, or the attempt, conspiracy, or solicitation to commit a class A+, A or A- offense;
- manslaughter in the Second Degree;
- a sex offense; or
- any offense category B+ or B offense when the offense includes the infliction of bodily harm, or if the juvenile was armed with a deadly weapon.

The JRA is required to pay the costs incurred by the juvenile courts for mental health and psychiatric evaluations, as well as supervision and treatment cost, subject to funds appropriated for this purpose.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is designed to expand the eligibility for the Disposition Alternative. It expands the eligibility by allowing more offenses to be eligible so long as they don't involve a deadly weapon or the infliction of bodily harm. It is cost effective to have research-based programs in the community. It saves the state money. The drop in crime rates indicate that these programs are doing well. We can do more under this bill. In 2004, we only used it for five kids, but we can quadruple this number and it would be a significant savings to the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; and Bruce Knutson, Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.